

REMARKS

In the Office Action of October 12, 2004, the Examiner stated that the application included claims directed to two patentably distinct species of the claimed invention. The Examiner requested the applicant to elect to prosecute a single species for prosecution on the merits.

As discussed with the Examiner during a telephone conversation on March 2, 2004, a provisional election was made to prosecute the invention of Group I, which included claims 12-16. By the present response, the applicant hereby affirms this election and has cancelled claims 1-11 from the application without prejudice. The applicant is currently in the process of deciding whether to present these claims for further examination in a divisional application and hereby elects the right to proceed accordingly.

In the Office Action, claims 12 and 13 were rejected under 35 USC §102(b) in view of the Chen U.S. Patent No. 6,155,743. Claim 12 was also rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by the Husson U.S. Patent No. 6,439,799.

In the Office Action, claims 14-16 were objected as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were deemed allowable if rewritten in independent form incorporating all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

By the present amendment, claim 12 has been amended to generally incorporate the subject matter of allowable claim 14, as well as the intermediate claim 13. Further, allowable claim 16 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 12.

Based upon the above amendments, claims 12 and 15-16 are believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested.

New claims 17-21 depend directly or indirectly from allowable claim 16 and are thus believed to be in condition for allowance. New claims 17-21 round out the scope of protection to which the applicant is believed to be entitled.

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Amendment dated January 12, 2005
Reply to Office Action of October 12, 2004

The Examiner is invited to contact the applicant's undersigned attorney with any questions or comments, or to otherwise facilitate prosecution of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph D. Kuborn', written in a cursive style.

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